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“COMMUNITY SERVICES TO VULNERABLE GROUPS”
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QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT
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Component III “Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities”

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I. PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The number of persons with disabilities in Belarus exceeds 500,000. There are 119,000 children with special needs, including about 30,000 children with disabilities among them. Discrimination and marginalization of adults and young people with disabilities is a typical social phenomenon for Belarus - while adults are often excluded from social and economic life, and decision-making practices, children with disabilities suffer from insufficient access to education and appropriate quality of services as well as social exclusion and a lack of participation opportunities.

From October 2008 – September 2012, ChildFund Belarus implemented the four-year project “Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities” funded by USAID in Belarus under the *Community Services to Vulnerable Groups* cooperative agreement (AID-121-A-00-05-00703). The project component aimed to include Belarusian people with disabilities into mainstream society and to strengthen the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities.

In October 2012, ChildFund Belarus entered the next three-year project phase. The People with Disabilities Component aims to increase the integration of people with disabilities (PWD) through the development of innovative services and strengthening the capacity of grassroots PWD organizations.

The project has three main objectives:

1. Build the organizational, networking and advocacy capacity of grassroots organizations supporting PWD and their families;
2. Support advocacy efforts by PWD grassroots organizations to promote inclusion;
3. Support introduction and development of inclusive education of children and young people with disabilities.

II. PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

This quarter, the project's activities focused on the sustainability of changes introduced within the course of project implementation. The project covered a wide spectrum of activities focused on capacity building, development of support services for further promotion of inclusive education in the pilot sites, and advocacy efforts of PWD organizations.

One of the major project highlights was a roundtable discussion on the draft Concept Paper on Inclusive Education in Belarus. The meeting aimed to facilitate a discussion that would address the concept paper from a variety of angles, thus, serving the needs of all stakeholders concerned. The focused and structured discussion during the meeting produced detailed statements regarding the advantages of the draft, its weak points and gaps, and possible solutions. This meeting presented an exceptional opportunity for a group of experts from universities, NGOs and Habilitation Centers for Children with Disabilities to meet and discuss the paper together, with everyone's valuable opinion being heard. It also facilitated a number of follow-up advocacy efforts undertaken by its participants that targeted decision makers in the Ministry of Education.

ChildFund and its partners in the regions provided technical support to further the development of inclusive education in the pilot sites. Interest in inclusive education is growing, evidenced by the fact that educational departments invite trainers of the National Trainers Group on Inclusive Education and cover the training expenses

from local budgets.

ChildFund maintained regular communication and provided technical support to the implementers of the sub-grant 'Inclusion. Resources. Possibilities', awarded last year. The project aimed to establish a community resource center for inclusive education with resources needed to introduce inclusive education practices into local schools. According to the project's monitoring and evaluation results, the model of support to children, parents and teachers through community-based resource centers was created. Considering the importance of the results of this pilot model of promoting inclusive education through community-based resource centers, ChildFund will organize an external expert evaluation of the project. The Ministry of Education expressed interest in this model and would like to take part in the evaluation.

In total:

- **Seven (7)** capacity-building events were implemented.
- **180** specialists from different regions and organizations were trained on inclusive education.
- **One** working meeting with stakeholders from Baranovichy region was conducted.
- **One** sub-grant for the amount of **\$4,259** was in the process of its implementation.
- **One** roundtable discussion on the Concept Paper on Inclusive Education in Belarus was conducted.

III. CHALLENGES/ CONSTRAINTS/OPPORTUNITIES

- The implementation of the 'Inclusion. Resources. Possibilities' sub-grant, which aimed to develop a community-based Resource Center for Inclusive Education, led to the identification of a discrepancy between two prerequisites for successful inclusive education: cooperation between stakeholders involved (specialists, parents, teachers) and regulatory requirements that create an enabling environment for inclusive approaches.
 - Specialists, parents of children with and without disabilities, and teachers demonstrated openness to inclusive approaches and a willingness to master them. All of them attempted to achieve changes through effective teamwork. However, the existing regulatory requirements (Ministry of Education documents that provides methodological recommendations and rules and regulations for specialists) that had been developed in 1995 impose limitations on the development of such teamwork. Moreover, inclusive education requires flexibility in terms of options that a specialist can choose to meet special educational needs of students with disabilities, while the regulations established 20 years ago prescribe specific activities for children with disabilities and recommends a "one size fits all" approach that does not allow for flexibility and creativity in teaching methods. The current regulatory requirements recommend that children with certain types of disabilities use a special curriculum that is different from the curriculum that the rest of the class uses. Also, the regulations recommend that children with disabilities spend a lot of time outside the classroom with a special education teacher. This segregation approach does not align with the principles of inclusive education, where all children use the same curriculum and the teacher uses flexible and creative teaching methods to reach children's needs. In addition, the current regulations focus solely on teachers and other specialists, and parents are not considered as resources and decision makers.
 - Janna Ovchinnikova, the Inclusive Education Specialist was out of the office on medical leave. Some of the planned activities for this quarter, including monitoring visits and the TOT (Training of Trainers) on Community Services to Vulnerable Groups: Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities

inclusive education were postponed until next quarter.

IV. SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVE 1: BUILD THE ORGANIZATIONAL, NETWORKING, AND ADVOCACY CAPACITY OF GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING PWD AND THEIR FAMILIES

ChildFund and its partners provided technical support for the further development of inclusive education in the pilot sites. Interest to inclusive education in the country is growing, as evidenced by the fact that educational departments invite trainers of the National Trainers Group on Inclusive Education and cover the training expenses from local budgets. The trainers used methodological resources developed within the project.

In total:

- **Seven (7)** capacity-building events were conducted.
- **180** specialists from the different regions and organizations were trained on inclusive education.
- **One** working meeting with stakeholders from the Baranovich region was conducted.

Technical support to the further development of inclusive education in the pilot sites:

Capacity building of local specialists in Zhodino

ChildFund's project partner Zhodino Habilitation Center for Children with Disabilities continued inclusive education capacity building in Zhodino.

- On October 9, 2014, Irina Kutsepalova, a member of the National Trainers Group on Inclusive Education and the Head of Zhodino Habilitation Center for Children with Disabilities, and her staff conducted a master class 'Innovations in teaching' within the Conference organized by the Department of Education of Zhodino. The master class was attended by **29 specialists** from different education institutions in Zhodino: primary school teachers, teachers of mainstream secondary schools, teachers' aides, ECD specialists, and psychologists of schools and kindergartens. Within the master class, Irina provided an overview of the achievements in the area of inclusive education in their town and shared methods and tools on its further development in educational entities that were developed by the National Trainers Team on Inclusive Education.

The Zhodino Habilitation Center for Children with Disabilities played the role of capacity-building provider for neighboring communities:

- On November 13, 2014, Irina Kutsepalova, a member of the National Trainers Group on Inclusive Education and the Head of Zhodino Habilitation Center for Children with Disabilities, organized a session on 'Teaching strategies for children with intellectual disabilities' within an **educational marathon**, a capacity-building event, organized by the Oblast Department of Education, across 5 oblasts that focuses on best practices in education. The session focused on relationships between education institutions and children with disabilities. The event was hosted by Zhodino Habilitation Center for Children with Disabilities. **31 school teachers** from the communities of Cherven, Beryoza, Smolevichi and Zhodino participated in the training.

Capacity building of local specialists in Baranovichi:

ChildFund supported efforts of the Resource Center on Inclusive Education of Baranovichi University to develop an inclusive culture in the Baranovichi region:

- From October 7-8, 2014, the ChildFund specialist, who was a certified trainer on TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children) methodology, supported training on 'TEACCH methodology in inclusive classroom' at the Resource Center on Inclusive Education. In total, **48 local specialists**. Participants included: **24 kindergartens and primary schools** in Baranovichi that use inclusive approaches in their classrooms and **24 ECD (Early Childhood Development) and primary education students**. The participants were introduced to the complex approach of TEACCH to support children with autism and children with communication difficulties in learning. The participants practiced analyzing visual culture and using visual stimuli as an alternative form of communication in teaching. They also learned how to use structured space, time and activities in the classroom in order to create the optimal conditions for children with autism and other communication difficulties.

- On November 26, 2014, at the Resource Center on Inclusive Education at Baranovichi State University **11 administrators of secondary schools** (masters and deputy masters of schools, rural kindergarten/primary schools and specialists of the district Habilitation Center for Children with Disabilities) were presented with the basic inclusive education conceptual framework and developed key competencies to promote inclusive education. This training targeted the rural specialists that are very accustomed to segregated approaches. In rural areas, opportunities for children with disabilities to receive quality assistance are very poor as habilitation centers are often distant from their homes. For this reason, the best education that children with disabilities living in rural areas can receive is home education. The training equipped administrators and teachers of rural mainstream schools with an understanding of children's social development needs. The cost for this training was shared between Baranovichi State University and ChildFund.

By the end of the quarter, all educational entities in Baranovichi region (both in rural and urban areas, pre-schools and schools) had at least one specialist and school leader trained on inclusive education. As a result, educational entities (both rural and urban) in Baranovichi region can cooperate on inclusion education development as they share the same set of values.

Meeting with local stakeholders in Baranovichi:

- On November 26, 2014, ChildFund's team had a meeting with local stakeholders, including the Department of Education; schools; and the Vice-rector, the Head of the Resource Center on Inclusive Education and students from Baranovichi University, in order to get their feedback on the activities that were supported by ChildFund and discuss future plans for inclusive education in the Baranovichi region. The Resource Center of Baranovichi University was identified as one of the key partners in further development of inclusive education in the region. As a follow-up to the meeting, they provided ChildFund with their annual working plan, in order to further coordination and cooperation. Paul Bode,

ChildFund International's Regional Director, attended the meeting. He was interviewed by the local TV station and he promoted the idea of inclusion of children with disabilities in all spheres of community life.

Further dissemination of inclusive education by the members of the National Trainers Team on Inclusive Education:

- Elena Serkulsкая, the leader of partner NGO Special World and a member of the National Trainers Team on Inclusive Education, delivered a lecture on 'Adaptive physical education in an inclusive classroom' at the University of Physical Culture (Minsk) within its retraining program. Twenty seven **(27) participants** including **16 special education teachers** and **11 teachers of physical education** from mainstream schools that represented town- and rayon-level institutions in 23 localities from Minsk, Vitebsk, Grodno, Mogilev and Brest oblasts.
- Olga Svetlakova, a member of National Trainers Team on Inclusive education, conducted a training for a group of **Twenty four (24) parents and education specialist** on 'Inclusive education promotion methods' at the invitation of the Gluski Department of Education (Mogilev oblast). The training introduced specialists and parents from a very remote community to the basic ideas and the conceptual framework of inclusive education. Participants developed an awareness for the importance of actively engaging the community in educational processes aimed at children with disabilities. The trainer used training materials/modules produced by ChildFund. All of the expenses were covered through allocated community resources.
- Tatiana Odynets, a member of the National Trainers Team on Inclusive Education, continued to enhance the capacity of education specialists in Krichev, Mogilev oblast at the methodological conference of the local Department of Education. On November 26, 2014, Tatiana conducted training for a group of **Ten (10) specialists** from 10 ECD centers and local schools. This was a follow-up training for participants who had been previously trained on inclusive education. The training focused on change management to introduce inclusion in educational setting. Participants developed skills to assess resources of an education institution and use them to develop a plan of incremental steps to introduce inclusive education into an institution. Then, they learned tools to monitor the implementation process for inclusive approaches. All of the expenses were covered through allocated community resources.

OBJECTIVE 2: SUPPORT ADVOCACY EFFORTS BY PWD GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS TO PROMOTE INCLUSION

Roundtable discussion on the Concept paper on Inclusive Education (December 22, 2014)

This quarter, the Ministry of Education completed the development of a draft version of the Concept Paper on Inclusive Education in Belarus and presented it for public discussion. On December 22, 2014, ChildFund organized a roundtable meeting to facilitate discussion among **15** stakeholders of inclusive education in Belarus. Participants included faculty members from three universities (Belarusian State University, Gomel State University, and Baranovich State University); heads of NGOs and Associations of parents of children with disabilities (Otkrovenie, Special world, Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities, BelAPD and the Levanina

Center); and practitioners of special education (representatives from Habilitation Centers for Children with Disabilities from Grodno, Gomel, and Mogilev oblasts).

The meeting aimed to facilitate a discussion that would address the concept paper from a variety of perspectives, thus, serving the needs of all stakeholders concerned. The focused and structured discussion during the meeting produced detailed statements regarding the strengths of the draft, its weaknesses and gaps, and possible solutions for moving forward. This meeting presented an exceptional opportunity for a group of experts to meet and discuss the paper together, with everyone's valuable opinion being heard.

The participants viewed the concept paper being developed as a positive and significant advancement in inclusive education development. Also, they expressed concerns regarding some ambiguous definitions, minor structural weaknesses, and approaches to measuring results. The meeting concluded with the joint decision that every participating organization will file letters to the Ministry of Education with the suggestion to suspend the approval of the Concept Paper on Inclusive Education and to invite other stakeholders to further develop the Concept Paper.

Advocacy efforts by the project participants to promote Inclusive Education

IV Forum on Children's Initiatives (December 4, 2014). The project's partner NGO Special World continued the tradition of the Annual Forum on Children's Initiatives. The event originated as a pilot sub-grant project supported by ChildFund in 2011 and its motto is 'The world is open to everyone' as it is an inclusive event that brings together both children with and without disabilities. Every year, the Forum presents distinctive approaches to inclusion of children with disabilities.

This year, the Forum presented recreational inclusive activities that all children can share together during their free time afterschool – innovative methods to encourage inclusion of children with disabilities into school community. **70 Forum participants from six Minsk schools** split into teams to explore the unique collection of 12 table games and competed for the Cup. **Ten (10) physical education teachers** were presented with methods of using table games as part of adaptive physical education.

OBJECTIVE 3: SUPPORT INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In order to support the introduction and development of inclusive education, the project provided technical assistance for the implementation of the sub-grant 'Inclusion. Resources. Possibilities.' awarded the previous year.

Piloting the Model of Resource Center on Inclusive Education

ChildFund maintained regular communication and provided technical support to the implementers of the sub-grant 'Inclusion. Resources. Possibilities', awarded last year. The project aimed to establish a community resource center for inclusive education with resources needed to introduce inclusive education practices into local schools. According to the project's monitoring and evaluation results, the model of support to children, parents and teachers through community-based resource centers was created. Considering the importance of the results of this pilot model of promoting inclusive education through community-based resource centers, ChildFund will

organize an external expert evaluation of the project. The Ministry of Education expressed interest in this model and would like to take part in the evaluation.

This quarter, ChildFund announced a TOT (Training of Trainers) on inclusive education. This information was disseminated among universities, re-training institutes and NGOs/Parents' associations that did not have their own trainers on inclusive education. As a result, **20 people** formed a new TOT group, which consisted of 75% representatives of universities and re-training institutes and 25% NGOs representatives.

➤ *For more information, please see Annex 2, 3*

VI. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

Coordination and Cooperation with USAID

Jahor Novikau, USAID AOTR, and Irina Mironova, ChildFund's Chief of Party, communicated regularly through meetings, e-mails, and phone calls.

- On December 17, 2014, Jahor Novikau and Irina Mironova had a coordination meeting with Vlad Velichko, an independent evaluator of Community Services to Vulnerable Groups project, who was hired by USAID. They provided Vlad with project background information and discussed future activities within the project evaluation.
- On November 4, 2014, Irina Mironova participated in an NGO meeting with Alexander Kasanaf, the new Director of the Department of Eastern Europe, USA State Department.

Coordination and Cooperation with ChildFund International Headquarters

ChildFund Belarus was in regular communication with ChildFund International's Headquarters in Richmond via e-mail and Skype. Paul Bode, ChildFund Regional Director, visited Belarus from November 24-28, 2014. He met with Jahor Novikau, USAID AOTR, and visited a project site in Baranovichi.

Coordination and Cooperation with other organizations:

ChildFund Belarus actively promoted the advancement of children's rights and building a broad constituency through participation and presentations at the following advocacy events:

- Meeting with Jean-Claude Legrand, UNICEF Regional Advisor, Child Protection, (October 2, 2014, Minsk).
- Meeting with Ms. Marie-Pierre Poirier, the UNICEF Regional Director *for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, (November 11, 2014, Minsk).

III. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

ChildFund Belarus has held weekly project review meetings in Minsk to strengthen project management, performance, and integration, leading to enhanced cooperation and communication between project staff. The project team improved their capacity through the following events:

- Irina Mironova participated in the Regional UNICEF Conference "Strengthening protective mechanisms in area of child protection, exploitation and violence," (November 12-13, 2014, Minsk).

- Irina Mironova and Natalia Kovalchuk took part in the ChildFund Regional Leadership Meeting in Mexico, from December 8-12, 2014. They mastered their skills in human resource management, financial management and budgeting, modern fundraising, and leadership. All expenses associated with this trip were covered by ChildFund.

There were some changes in project staffing:

The recommendation not to hire a new PWD Project Manager was approved by Jahor Novikau, USAID AOTR. Julia Popruzhenko was approved by USAID AOTR for the position of OVC/PWD Project Manager.

Elena Karpenko, PR and Communication Specialist, voluntary left her position on October 24, 2014. ChildFund announced this vacancy and conducted a series of interviews with the short-listed candidates. So far, no candidates have met the requirements for this position and ChildFund will continue its search.

Significant decreases in project activities and the budget in this fiscal year required coordination for alignment between project workload and staff composition. This led to job cuts in the office and the reallocation of job responsibilities between the existing staff. The contract agreement for the fiscal year was not extended to the following staff members: Natalia Shrub, Project Assistant; Valdimir Nadolsky, Driver; and Maria Babarykina, Office Manager. Olga Kuzmina agreed to take over the combined responsibilities of Office Manager and Project Assistant.

VIII. BUDGET

This quarter, the project expenses were **\$39,935.95** including ICR; this represents **22%** of the annual budget. The SF-425 report was submitted under separate cover by ChildFund International.